Philosophy of Education

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Emily Johnson

Georgia Southern University

**I. How Teaching Should Be Carried Out**

One of Confucius’ five virtues, right knowledge, is distinctly appropriate for how teaching should be carried out. Teachers can maintain the right knowledge by participating in professional learning. I believe that participating in on-going professional development is necessary in order for teachers to maintain and further their educational knowledge. Professional development should focus on many things including research-based instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and cultural proficiency. I believe that teachers who recognize that you never stop learning are of the best kind. Confucius wrote about always staying “hungry for knowledge” which is a main idea in my educational philosophy. I believe that teachers who know they learn just as much from the students as the students do from them are to be admired. I also believe that when you do not know something, the best thing to do is admit it. Confucius wrote, “Do you want to know what knowledge is? When you know something, recognize that you know it, and when you don’t know something, recognize that you don’t know it. That’s knowledge” (Book 2, Chapter 17). The truth is, educators do not have all of the answers, but we do have a lot to offer. Having the right attitude and moral courage, two of Confucius’ five virtues, are imperative in our ability to instruct students. Our instruction should focus on increasing student knowledge and self-motivation so that they learn and want to explore their creativity and imagination. We should encourage our students to dream big dreams and then go and achieve them no matter the odds. I could not agree more when Hess (2009) states, “What we need is an education system that teaches deep knowledge, that values creativity and originality, and that values thinking skills” (p. 7).

Our instruction should involve many different ways to reach students because every student is different and learns in different ways. We should strive to form relationships with our students so that we can better serve their needs. Our cultural differences can present many difficulties in reaching our students needs so it is important to recognize the cultural boundaries that do exist and form ways to break through them.

Another of Confucius’ five virtues, right procedure, is necessary for the most beneficial learning. I believe that Conley (2011) accurately describes the difference between right and wrong procedure when he states, “Content mastery is not sufficient. As frustrating as it may be to hear, simply getting students to recall some facts or answer questions correctly on a test does not make them ready for college and careers – nor is it likely to guarantee high performance on the common assessments” (p. 20). We should teach our students to use their critical thinking skills and not just simple memorization techniques. Students will benefit much more from acquiring problem solving skills when they reach real world situations. Conley (2011) also recommends students being active learners. He describes an intriguing curriculum when he states, “curriculum that includes interesting problems, investigations, debates, simulations, games, Socratic questioning, presentations, projects, and other forms of learning that demand engagement will help maximize retention of key content and concepts” (p. 20). These are the ideas we should seek to fill our classrooms with. In doing so, students will be much more engaged and involved in their own learning and experience more meaningful instruction.

**II. How Students Learn**

We are currently dealing with students who are from what is popularly called the iGeneration. Our students spend so much time multitasking that many times, traditional instructional strategies tend to bore them. Rosen (2011) states, “The iGeneration is a creative, multimedia generation. They think of the world as a canvas to paint with words, sights, sounds, video, music, web pages, and anything that they can create” (p. 20). Students are interested in using technology as a pathway to learning. Rosen (2011) suggests allowing students to use their iPods while doing their work. To an educator, this might seem distracting. To a student, it may keep them focused on the task at hand. We must remember that our students are different and have different needs. This does not mean we should allow them to take advantage of this idea, though. In the technological age that we currently live in, we simply cannot ask students to ignore the technologies available to them while they are at school. Our students can process many different things at one time such as watching television, studying, listening to music, and text messaging friends. We as teachers must take advantage of the iGeneration’s characteristics. Rosen (2011) had an interesting finding as he states, “My research, and that of others, has shown that when kids interact online they are more honest and less shy than when they are in a face-to-face environment. Allowing some class discussion to happen online will encourage the shy students, those who never talk in class, to express themselves” (p. 21). Allowing students to expose their individual thoughts through anonymous systems such as these can help bring out knowledge that open classroom discussions would not. We must be creative in getting the most out of our students.

In addition, our students learn best when our instructional strategies are not aimed at increasing standardized test scores. When our focus is on drilling facts and increasing memorization in our students, we fail to recognize the impact we have on their diminishing critical thinking skills. Conley (2011) states, “It is actually more difficult for students to retain the myriad bits of content they encounter during the school year when they are taught through test-prep” (p. 18). Students learn best when they are engaged in active learning and instructional strategies that interest them.

My philosophy of education focuses on the works of Confucius and coincides with various other research-based theories and ideas. The most important aspect is that educators stay “hungry for knowledge” as Confucius stated. If we are always seeking ways to improve, we will give students much brighter opportunities for success in school and in life.

References

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